

Amendment to the Claims:

1-4. (Cancelled)

5. (Currently Amended) The A method of ~~claim 1~~, wherein treating a food product comprising:

spraying an exterior of the food product with a decontaminant solution containing an antimicrobial agent which includes peracetic acid for a sufficient time
5 to microbially decontaminate the exterior of the food product, the peracetic acid concentration is being from about 1000 to about 2000 ppm, and
recirculating the sprayed decontaminant solution.

6-10. (Cancelled)

11. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~[[1]]~~ 13, wherein the food product comprises hot dogs and the method further includes, prior to the step of contacting the exterior of the food product:

removing the hot dogs from casing skins.

12. (Cancelled)

13. (Currently Amended) A method of treating a cooked food product comprising:

a) spraying the cooked food product with a solution comprising peracetic acid in a first chamber; and
5 b) drying the cooked, sprayed food product in a second chamber.

14. (Original) The method of claim 13, further including:

c) after step a), rinsing the food product with a rinse fluid in a third chamber intermediate the first and second chambers.

15. (Original) The method of claim 13, further including:
conveying the food product through the first and second chambers on a conveyor system.

16. (Original) An apparatus for treatment of a food product comprising:
a first chamber;
spray nozzles disposed in the first chamber for spraying a decontaminant solution over the food product, the decontaminant solution including peracetic acid;
5 a source of the decontaminant solution;
a pump fluidly connected with the source of the decontaminant solution and the nozzles for supplying pressurized decontaminant solution to the nozzles;
a second chamber;
a source of a drying gas connected with the second chamber for drying the
10 decontaminated food product; and
a conveyor system which conveys the food product through the first and second chambers.

17. (Original) The apparatus of claim 16, further including:
a third chamber intermediate the first and second chambers, the conveyor system conveying the food product through the third chamber;
a source of a rinse fluid connected with the second chamber which
5 delivers a rinse fluid to the second chamber for rinsing the decontaminated food product.

18. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for treating a cooked food product comprising:
(a) a means for spraying the cooked food product with a solution comprising peracetic acid in a first chamber; and,
5 (b) a means for drying the cooked, sprayed food product in a second chamber.

19. (New) An apparatus for treating a food product comprising sausages, the apparatus comprising:

a means for cooking the sausages in casings;

a means for removing the sausages from casings;

5 a means for contacting an exterior of the decased sausages with a decontaminant solution containing an antimicrobial agent which includes peracetic acid for a sufficient time to microbially decontaminate the exterior of the decased sausages.

20. (New) The apparatus of claim 19, further including:

a means for rinsing the microbially decontaminated decased sausages to remove the decontaminant solution.

21. (New) The apparatus of claim 19, further including:

a means for sterile drying the decontaminated decased sausages.

22. (New) The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the peracetic acid in the decontaminant solution is at a concentration of from about 100 to about 4000 ppm.

23. (New) The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the means for contacting the food product with the decontaminant solution includes a means for spraying the decontaminant solution over the decased sausages.

24. (New) The apparatus of claim 23, wherein the food product is sprayed with the decontaminant solution for a period of from about 10 seconds to 5 minutes.

25. (New) The apparatus of claim 24, wherein the food product is sprayed with the decontaminant solution for a period of from about 1 to 2 minutes.

26. (New) The apparatus of claim 23, wherein the means for contacting the food product with the decontaminant solution includes a means for transporting the food product on a conveyor past spray nozzles which spray the decontaminant solution over the food product.

27. (New) The apparatus of claim 23, further including:
a means for recirculating the sprayed decontaminant solution.

28. (New) The apparatus of claim 23, further including:
a means for aseptically packaging the food product after drying the food product.